



Inside Congress

by United States Representative George R. Nethercutt, Jr.

For the week ending April 26, 2002

Welcome to this week's edition of Inside Congress. I am glad to share with you a little of my work in the national legislature. Please follow the listed links or contact my office for more information on the topics mentioned here.

PLEASE JOIN ME MAY 4 IN WILBUR

Please join me at Sarah's Restaurant in Wilbur at 7 a.m. on Saturday, May 4. I'd like to hear your concerns and hear how I can help make the government work better for you. Also, I'll be able to update you on the recently agreed-to Farm Bill.

SPOKANE VALLEY AQUIFER NEEDS \$3.5 MILLION FOR STUDY

I introduced legislation this week to authorize a study on the Rathdrum Prairie-Spokane Valley Aquifer, so that our community can do a better job of balancing good environmental stewardship with the need to bring more jobs to the Spokane area.

Water is one of the most precious resources in the Northwest, and this study is essential to the best possible management of the only source for Spokane's drinking water. Spokane County needs a strong voice protecting its drinking water.

The bill authorizes \$3.5 million for the Department of Interior to study the Rathdrum Prairie-Spokane Valley aquifer and develop a comprehensive computer model that will provide a scientifically defensible understanding of regional aquifer in both states. The bill stipulates that the study must be completed within three years of the bill's enactment.

Spokane and Kootenai Counties manage the aquifer very differently, in part because the limited and sometimes conflicting data on the aquifer can be interpreted in many ways. A study would provide data for the entities to reach a common understanding, seen by many as key to protecting the drinking water of thousands in the Inland Northwest, as well as making sure that jobs aren't kept out of the area due to a 10-year wait for water rights.

This study will help us create a win-win situation for the environment and the economy here.

EWU GETS \$1 MILLION FOR NEW COMPUTING ENGINEERING SCHOOL

Eastern Washington University will receive \$1 million from the Department of Education for the first phase of program development for the new School of Computing and Engineering Sciences.

Included in this program is the development of 14 new laboratories and curriculum in software engineering technology, cyber security, and applied information theory.

Through education and research, the school will strengthen the region's technological infrastructure, attract new employers, and act as a catalyst for a new and dynamic exchange of ideas. This is positive step toward continuing economic development in Eastern Washington and attracting new businesses that can bring quality, good-paying jobs to our region.

I requested funding for this project during the FY 2002 appropriations cycle and am pleased to see the funding given to the university.

TAX FREEDOM DAY IS TOMORROW

Tomorrow is Tax Freedom Day, the day the average American has earned enough to pay the next year's taxes. According to the Tax Foundation, it takes 117 days of income for an average American to pay his or her taxes. The tax relief legislation enacted last year has helped shrink this burden for Americans. In 2000, Tax Freedom Day fell on May 1.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

USDA reports that the average American spends 10.4 percent of his income, or 38 days to buy a year's supply of food. Of this amount, less than 20 percent of his food expenditure is paid to the farmer producing the food. This means that the average American spends less than 2 percent of his income for the actual food product, with the rest being spent the services, packaging, advertising and transportation to place the food on the shelf.

Compare these numbers to many developing countries in the world where individuals spend up to 70 percent of their income on food, and their food costs do not include all the services provided to Americans.

ON THE FLOOR

Here is a recap of the legislative activity for the week:

H.R. 3839 - Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2002. The bill passed by a vote of 411-5. I voted yes.

The bill reauthorizes and makes amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), the Adoption Opportunities program, the Abandoned Infants Assistance Act, and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA). The bill is aimed at preventing child abuse and family violence and protecting and treating abused and neglected children and victims of family violence. The bill also focuses on maintaining local projects with demonstrated value in eliminating barriers to permanent adoption and addressing the circumstances that often lead to child abandonment.

H.R. 3763 – Corporate and Auditing Accountability, Responsibility and Transparency Act. The bill passed by a vote of 334-90. I voted yes.

The bill aims to improve corporate responsibility, reform accounting oversight and increase corporate disclosure. The bill focuses on six principles: restoring confidence in accounting by creating a new, public regulatory board; increasing corporate disclosure and responsibility so that investors get more “real-time” information; protecting 401(k) plans by prohibiting insider sales during blackouts; strengthening the SEC by increasing its ability to perform its new functions; and reducing analyst conflict of interest.

The bill works to end abuses like the kind Enron and Global Crossing made famous, strengthen corporate responsibility, and protect families trying to plan for their futures.

H.R. 3231 – Barbara Jordan Immigration Reform and Accountability Act. The bill passed by a vote of 405-9. I supported the bill.

The legislation, named after the former chair of the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, now deceased. This legislation abolishes the Immigration and Naturalization Service in its current form, and breaks it into two separate organizations with different missions. The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) will concentrate on improving immigration backlogs for legal immigrants. The Bureau of Immigration Enforcement (BIE) will deny admission to aliens who should be kept out of the U.S., and apprehend and remove those aliens who should be deported. Each bureau will craft its own policies and will have its own budget and dedicated employees who cannot be shifted over to the other agency. The bill also creates an Associate Attorney General in the Department of Justice to handle only immigration affairs. This will create more accountability for the two bureaus' actions. In addition, an ombudsman position

will be created to help resolve problems between individuals, employers and the bureau.

INS reform has been desperately needed for years. I am optimistic that this is a step in the right direction.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

I always enjoy hearing from you. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance to you in any matter. Here are some of the ways you may reach me, especially if you know of others who may want to receive this report each week:

Spokane Office

920 W. Riverside, Suite 594
Spokane, WA 99201
509-353-2374
Fax: 509-353-2412

Spokane Valley Office

9209 E. Mission Avenue, Suite C
Spokane, WA 99206
509-924-7775
Fax: 509-924-7671

Colville Office

555 S. Main Street
Colville, WA 99114
509-684-3481
Fax: 509-684-3482

Walla Walla Office

29 S. Palouse Street
Walla Walla, WA 99362
509-529-9358
Fax: 509-529-9379

Washington, D.C. Office

223 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-224-2006
Fax: 202-225-3392

Website

www.house.gov/nethercutt

Electronic Mail

www.house.gov/nethercutt/contact